

## Completion of Palazzo Farnese

It is probable that Michelangelo concentrated his attention on the problems of Palazzo Farnese only in the period that separated the death of Antonio da Sangallo the Younger (1546), the previous architect of the palace, from that of Paul III (1549), the person for whom it was built. As the ground floor and *piano nobile* had already been constructed, Michelangelo devoted himself to the cornice, which he decided to make exceptionally large (it is all of three meters high) and to decorate with a variety of elements drawn from different architectural orders. The extraordinary grandeur of the cornice, the biggest to have been built up to that time, made it necessary to strengthen the whole structure and to add another story to keep the proportions balanced. However, the most revolutionary innovation, which was to have an influence on private buildings in the future, was the creation of a vertical axis in the middle of the facade, made up of the doorway, balcony, and imposing coat of arms. In the courtyard, Michelangelo built the gallery facing onto the garden and enriched the decorations of the stone architectural elements, a task that was made easier by the malleability of Roman travertine in comparison with the Carrara marble that he had preferred to use up until then. His designs for the layout of the garden at the back and its connection with the other bank of the Tiber were never realized.